

16 April 1970

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Howard M. Ehrmann
Chief, Historical Staff

FROM

1. In response to your suggestion, I am submitting to you some ideas on historical research I would like to undertake.

2. I have my preference, of course, and this will be found in Part One and is entitled "The Emergence of CIA, 1937-1947."

25X6 3. Part Two summarizes several projects in the pre-CIA period. I hope to write [REDACTED] to Establish a U. S. Security Service" for an early issue of the Studies in Intelligence.

4. Part Three contains a statement on possible post-1947 research topics.

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Part One: "The Emergence of CIA, 1937-1947"

I. Introduction

To propose the writing of a history of the establishment of the Agency, 1937-1947, is for a variety of reasons - need, money, priorities, etc. - tantamount to inviting the outright dismissal of the idea. Before that is done, however, I would like a chance to consider some of those objections and then briefly outline my proposal.

II. Some Objections

A. Objection #1: It's Been Done!

On the contrary, it has been attempted, but it has never been accomplished. There is not in existence one volume or a series of volumes, classified or unclassified, which cover in systematic, comprehensive and balanced fashion the ten years that led to the establishment of CIA. There are only the following partial and inadequate histories:

1. The Deuel History: it covers only the pre-COI period and COI itself, but it has been outdated by the discovery of new material that was not available when Mr. Deuel wrote it in 1944.

2. The Conyers Read History: this is not a history of OSS but only of its branches; it is a story of parts, not of a whole.

3. The "War Report:" this is a finished, two-volume, published book on the OSS which is radically deficient as history basically because it was written so close to the events that little attention was paid to the personalities involved.

4. The [REDACTED] history: Much of this has been published in Studies in Intelligence. Like all the others, however, its coverage is partial; it neglects the pre-COI period and COI itself, and really covers OSS only as a springboard for pre- and post-1947 developments. Also, it so concentrates on bureaucratic developments as to miss the role of Congress and the general public in the post-war attitudinal changes that helped make the Agency possible.

5. It might be thought that somehow these could be re-typed and strung together like pearls to make a work of art. I submit, however, that they

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are so radically diverse in conception, scholarship, literary style, and documentation as to make that hope illusory.

B. Objection #2: Anyhow, it's not needed.

1. The fact that it has not been done is, I submit, sufficient reason for doing it.

2. Secondly, now - twenty to thirty years later - is really the time to do it. Not only is time, the ingredient for historical perspective, operative, but the changing mood of three decades - pre-war hostility to espionage and intelligence, war-time acceptance of it, and now a recurrence of distrust - enables us to develop a truer appreciation, than was possible earlier, of the historical significance of the emergence of an organization like CIA.

3. A third reason lies in the changing character of the Agency's population. For years now the Agency has been living off the habitual knowledge of "old timers," who themselves have not needed the written record as a vivifying force in their professional lives. The newcomers, however, the dominant part of that population, lack such knowledge, have less and less contact with those who do, and really have no place to go to find it. They cannot find the roots.

4. They may, indeed, feed on mis-information, and this is a fourth reason for the need of a decent history. Foes of the Agency seem to be doing a better literary job on CIA than its friends; Ross and Wise nourish more than Kirkpatrick and Ford. Sooner or later someone will attempt to write what I propose; is it wrong or unwise to suggest that the Agency write the definitive account of its own origin?

C. Objection #3: Even so, it's been tried so many times that there's no point in trying again.

Here I must interject a personal argument. I doubt if there ever has been anyone as ready and eager as I am to undertake this job. I hope that [REDACTED] is a reasonably satisfying indication of the likely quality of the work I would hope to turn out. For what it is worth, I have already invested considerable time and thought in this topic, and hence the work is, in a sense, actually in progress.

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D. Objection #4: Mr. Helms has already said No.

I might as well face the fact that it might be thought that Mr. Helms closed the door on this proposal when, in approving work on my COI paper, he indicated that he would not again approve research "concerning OSS, General Donovan, etc., which he feels should have been exhaustively done before this time." (See Memorandum from the Executive Director-Comptroller to the General Counsel et al, 14 July 1969, Exec. Reg. 69-3222/1). I can only say that I propose to cover much wider territory than OSS, and to cover the entire ten years in a way which has never been attempted. I intend not to re-tell the exploits of OSS but to account for the emergence, transformation and final crystallization of the idea of intelligence in the establishment of CIA.

III. My Proposal

A. I suggest that what is needed now and can be produced now is a one-volume, available, readable, and reliable history of the entire movement from COI to CIA. This would be a work of scholarship readily and easily available for reading or study.

B. I suggest that its coverage not only be bureaucratic and organizational but also that it take the high ground and show by reference to the Presidency, the Congress, and the public that the establishment of the Agency represented the maturation within American society of the modern idea of intelligence as an integral component of contemporary government.

C. I suggest that this volume be written as a classified document for internal use but that when it is completed some thought be given to declassifying it and marketing it commercially. I think the public's need for such a volume complements the Agency's need for an understanding public.

IV. Conclusion

I have not tried to say the last word on this proposal. I know there are other considerations, and I would happily answer any questions.

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Part Two: Some Proposals for Pre-1947 Research

I. Upsetting the Revisionists

There is a school of thought today which argues that intelligence, especially the CIA, is the outgrowth of the Cold War and that the disappearance of the Cold War must carry off CIA with it. The stock answer to this argument is that the shock of Pearl Harbor accounts basically for the modern American intelligence establishment. To my knowledge, no attention has been paid to an earlier period and experience which were instrumental in undermining certain settled American attitudes, especially in the Department of State, against espionage, and in preparing leaders in and out of government to recognize the need for intelligence. I refer roughly to the years 1937-1940 when the fear of a Fifth Column awakened Washington to the real and sometimes imagined threats to the United States via Nazi intrigue in South America. A preliminary search of State Department traffic in the National Archives suggests to me that State's attitudes on espionage received their first modern challenge from American ambassadors and other officials dealing with these threats at first hand. Minds were already changing when the Japanese struck; one could even argue they had not been changing fast enough. In any case, this story, if properly investigated and re-told, will, I think, go far to show the long, real, and genuine experience that gave rise to this Agency. Up to six months would be required to handle this subject.

II. Post-war public opinion on setting up CIA

What were the considerations, the fears, the hopes that caused the American people in 1945-1947 to support the establishment of CIA? There is a mass of evidence - some of it in scrapbooks [REDACTED] to show that the subject was widely discussed in editorials, news columns, speeches, articles, etc. This evidence appears rich in reminders of and insights into the mood of the country on the role of intelligence in the U.S. government and in the 20th century. I think that this evidence will show - what is perhaps obvious but has never been spelled out - the CIA to have emerged organically from the necessities of American life and in accordance with American governmental traditions and procedures. This work could be made book-length or an article; the former would require a year of research and writing.

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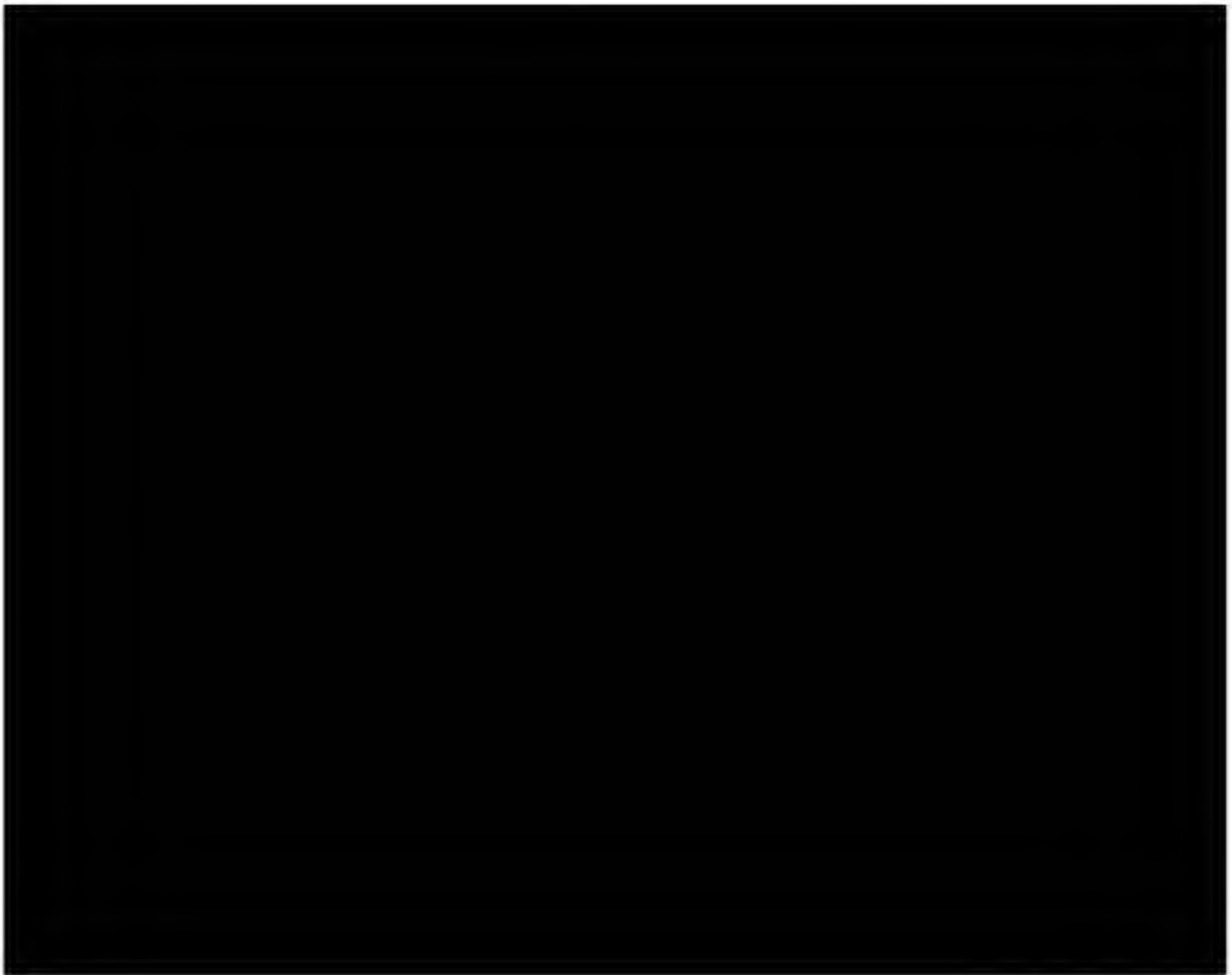
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III. Drafting the Charter of COI

In the records of the Bureau of the Budget are the most important of the papers which show the substantive and stylistic changes that were made in the drafting of the executive order setting up the Coordinator of Information. This is the fundamental document in the long string of orders and laws by which COI, OSS and CIA have been governed. It would seem to deserve special historical treatment. In view of the work I have already done, this could be completed in a month.

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Part Three: A Statement on Post-1947 Research

In the past few years I have spent so much time on the pre-1947 period that I am understandably much better informed on the research and writing that have been done on that period than I am on the later period. In the later years there are any number of topics and episodes which come immediately to mind as worthy of study; but since I am not familiar with what has been done, is in process or may be done, I am reluctant to make suggestions which might too easily be shot down. However, since you asked me to suggest some topics, let me do so with the proviso that these are ideas for discussion rather than specific proposals. Let me also indicate my readiness to receive from you some suggestions born of your own extensive familiarity with the field to be covered.

Following are topics or areas in which for a variety of reasons I have some interest and/or competency:

1. The Role of the CIA in the world-wide Growth of the Intelligence Establishment, 1947-1970.
2. The Growth of the American Intelligence Community in the Post-War World.
3. Post-war Investigations of CIA: Their Origin, Course, and Results; A Pattern of Change: Flap, Investigation, and Reorganization.
4. Changes in American Attitudes toward the CIA, 1947-1970: The Impact of Foreign and Domestic Events on the Agency's Image.
5. The Philby Affair: How It Happened.
6. The Powers-U2 Episode: Intelligence and Diplomacy on Trial.
7. 
8. Vietnam: The Green Beret Case - The Record and the Lessons.

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